

La comédi@thèque

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Him and Her

Interactive Monologue



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**Jean-Pierre Martinez is a French playwright and scriptwriter.
He was born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise, France. He wrote 25 comedies.
Him and Her is the only one translated in English.**

Artists Entrance

Dark. As if the show is about to start. However nothing happens long enough for the public to become unsettled. The light appears in a corner where two spectators, a man and a woman - strangers - are sitting side by side. The man looks nervously at a cinema/theatre guide, and then at his watch. The woman picks pop corn out of a huge bag, noisily stuffing handful after handful into her mouth.

Him - Sorry... Do you know what's going on ?

Her - I guess we are waiting for the actors...

Him - Until now, only the audience were late for shows. If actors start doing the same...

Silence.

Her (*worried*) - Can I have a look at your guide ? In case the play has been cancelled...

He gives her his guide. But she doesn't know how to take it, with her pot of pop corn in her hands.

Her (*showing him the bag of popcorn*) - Do you want some ?

He has no choice but to take the bag. She looks at the guide, but seems to be lost in it. He eats some pop corn with disgust.

Her - Sorry, I'm used to Time Out. I can't find anything...

Him - And I don't like pop corn...

She gives him back his guide, and takes back her pop corn.

Her - Anyway, it's too late for a movie... We're better off to waiting.

Him - I hope it's worth it...

Her (*worried*) - Bad critics ?

Him (looking towards the public) - There aren't many people...

Her – Well, the critics... They don't mean much.. Sometimes, you see things, glorified by the critics. It lasts hours... but no one dares say they're bored, for fear they sound like an idiot. Afterwards, they'll tell you : " That play was so deep, the proof : you didn't understand a word of it..."

Him - Comedy is a different kettle of fish. If people don't laugh during the show, they won't tell you after : "Only a critic can understand how hysterically funny it is".

Her - Are you a critic ?

Him (*astonished*) - Not you ?

Her - Actress...

Him – Of course...

Her - Only actors and critics go to the theatre nowadays... One in two spectators is an actor. It's hard to tell where the stage is these days...

Him - You know the play ?

Her - Oh, no... But a friend of mine is performing in it. I came to see her... To do her a favour...

Him - Is she a famous actress...?

Her - She mostly does theatre...

Him - In that case... (*Suspicious*) You really are an actress?

Her (*worried*) - You don't think I'm a good one ?

Him - Oh, no... You are very good.

Her - Actress by night and... museum attendant during the day.

Him - If you consider the modernity of the repertoire, it's more or less the same job, isn't it...?

Silence.

Her - I have no more pop corn.

Him - We might die before the show starts.

Her - Yes... It seems that they have forgotten us...

Him - In a few years, a cleaner will find our skeletons lying side by side, hand in hand...

Her - Hand in hand...?

Him - I think as the end grows near, we'll become more affectionate towards each-other. We are like two shipwrecked souls on a desert island, aren't we ? We don't have much choice...

Her - You think they will give us our money back ?

Him (*astonished*) - Don't tell me that you paid for this...

Her - Of course, not...

Him - Then...

They stand up in order to leave.

Him - We can always come back another time...

Her - If the play is still on. Which seems very unlikely...

Him - We could go to see another one.

Her - Is that an invitation...?

Him (*showing an invitation*) - For two.

Her - I hope that this time, it will start on time... What is it ?

Him (*reading the invitation*) – Him and her...

Her – Looks boring too...

Him - Sorry, I have to turn my mobile on...

Her – Oh, yes... I forgot to switch mine off...

They leave. Lights down.

1 - Wedding night

Him and her fall down on a couch, obviously exhausted.

Her - I thought they would never leave...

Him - They say that seven out of ten couples don't have sex during their wedding night. Now I understand why...

Her - We could try to improve the average...

Him - You forget that we take off at 6.45 AM... From Luton...

Her - From Luton ?

Him - I told you ! I got the tickets on ebay...

Him - Why do the low cost companies have to take off from the most depressing town in England...? On the other hand, it's true that when you leave from Luton, it makes anywhere look like a dream destination. Even Bratislava...

Him - They say that Bratislava is very beautiful... In spring...

Her - Don't you mean Prague...?

Him - Similar region ?

Her - The Seychelles are beautiful all year round.. And don't forget that spring starts only in two months...

Him - Oh, The Seychelles... Everybody goes there...

Her - It's true that a honeymoon to Bratislava is a lot more original... We won't meet lots of honeymooners on the plane... The only couple who mixed up Bratislava with Brasilia resold their tickets on ebay...

Him - We will treat ourselves with the Seychelles in a few years... For our wedding anniversary...

Her - Yeah. Our silver anniversary... When I won't be able to get into my swimsuit... *(Sigh)* Life is unfair. We should inherit at 20, start working at 50 when we've finished our retirement, and procreate at 70, to have some company in our old age... And marriage would be at the end, a final vow...

Him - On the other hand, a lifetime without a mother in law... Is it really worth it...?

Her - Do you think I will still love you in 20 years ?

Him - Will you still have the choice...? When you can't find a swimsuit that fits...

Her - I know a girl who said "no" on her wedding day, for a joke. She wanted to say "yes" immediately after but the mayor did not like the joke at all. She had to wait six months to get married for real... Turns out there's a legal delay. Like for a driving licence. When you screw up, you can't take it again right away. Did you know that ?

Him - No...

Her - This wedding was as boring as hell, wasn't it ?

Him - People don't marry just for the fun...

Her - Don't tell me that they do it to go to Bratislava from Luton in the middle of the night. Or I'll start asking myself why I said yes... What country is Bratislava in ?

Him - Well... Prague was the capital of Tcheoslovaquia...

Her - Then you don't even know which country you're taking me to for our honeymoon ! My mother was right : I really don't know were I am going with you...

Him - Wait... Prague is now capital of Tchequia... Bratislava should be capital of Slovakia. Or Slovenia... Anyway, it's in Europe ! We don't even need a passport...

Her - And you, will you still love me in 20 years...?

Him - How could I not love my whole life long a girl who is ready to follow me to an unknown country of the EEC...?

She - If it's a test then...

They kiss each other.

Him - I don't want to hurry you, but our plane takes off in two hours. And it's quite a long way to Luton...

2 - Cherry time

A couple, sitting on a couch.

Her - Did you see ? The cherry tree is in flower.

Him - Another year has past...

Silence.

Her - We're happy, aren't we...?

Him - Yes... *(After a moment)* We're bored stiff, aren't we ?

Her - Together ?

Him - Generally.

She thinks about it.

Her - We could buy another couch...

Him - What would we do with the old one ?

Her - Take a vacation...

Him - To go where ?

Her - Organise a party...

Him - To celebrate what ?

Her - The flowering of our cherry tree !

Him - They say that Japanese people do that, in spring. Invite friends round to contemplate their cherry tree, sipping tea...

Her - We should better hurry up. Some petals are already falling...

Him - So is some of my hair...

Her - Your hair ?

Him - It starts by one, and then you go bald before you know it... *(After a moment)* And who would we invite ?

Her - Friends !

Him - Friends...? We've got friends...?

Her - Probably...

Him - Anyway, people are always busy...

Her - You just need to give them notice.

Him - You invite them for a drink, they get out their diary... Instead of having a drink, you discuss about a possible date. Then they call you back to cancel and fix a new date... When I go for a drink, it's right on the spot. In three weeks, I might not be thirsty anymore. There is no more improvisation !

Her - Maybe because people are afraid of being bored...

Him - You'll see ! They will be busy. They will discuss a possible date. Meanwhile, the cherry tree's petals will have fallen down...

Her - A carpet of petals is pretty too...

Him - Today it is sunny. But what the weather will be like in a month ? In addition to matching agendas, you have to consult the weather report. Inviting friends becomes even more complicated than foreseeing an eclipse. No... Instead of taking a chance on having fun with all this people in a month, I'd rather the guarantee of being bored with you right now.

Her - That's so sweet...

Him - A few days ago, my best friend leaves me a message. I had not heard of him for months. I call him back right away to invite him for a drink. He tells me that he is busy, that he will call me to fix a date. I am still waiting. I never knew why he called me in the first place...

Her - Maybe he felt a little down...

Him - I don't know if he did not feel so lonely after he called... In six months, he will probably call me again, and it will be the same. Is that what we call friends, now ? The same with the web ? They tell you that it is «friendly». You don't even say hello to the guy next door, but with your computer, you will be able to chat with the Chinese in Esperanto. Do you know many Chinese people ?

Her - When I was a child, I used to communicate with my little neighbour by night, in Morse, with electric lamps. Even then it didn't work very well...

Him - People are overbooked all the time. What can they possibly have so interesting to do, not to have a single moment to drink a coffee with their best friend without notice. I try to stay available. But nobody else ever is. So I get bored... You never get bored ?

Her - With you, never...

Silence.

Him - What about having this drink anyway ?

Her - The two of us ?

Him - Would you be available ?

Her - When ?

Him - Right now.

Her - Why not ?

Him - I'll get the glasses.

Her - I'll take care of the peanuts.

Somebody rings the bell.

Him - Are we expecting somebody ?

Her - No. Who can that be ? It's almost dinner time.

Him - People are so bad-mannered. They won't leave you alone, even at the week-end.

Her - I'll go to see who it is...

Him - I'm not here for anyone.

She turns to him.

Her - And what if it's a friend ?

He thinks about it.

Him - Tell him that our Japanese cherry tree is still in flower, and that he should come back when it has cherries...

3 - TV breakdown

A couple sitting on a couch, staring into space.

Her - Anything interesting on TV tonight ?

Him - I don't know. Why ?

Her - Just like that... *(After a while)* You really don't want us to buy another one ?

Him - When we had a TV, we couldn't help watching it !

Her - That's why a TV is made for, isn't it ?

Him - We were totally moronic with the TV ! We didn't do anything else !

They keep staring into space. Not doing anything.

Her *(ironical)* - What shall we do now ?

Him - What do you want us to do ?

Her - Nothing...

Him - It's still better than watching TV... When there was only one channel, at least... But now, with the satellite...

Her *(nostalgic)* - When I was a child, we had no TV. I used to go watch it to at my neighbour's...

Him *(ironical)* - You want me to ask the neighbour if you can go watch TV with him ?

Silence.

Her - We could talk.

He looks at her, upset.

Her - Since we no longer have TV, we could use the time to talk.

Him - Well... You first.

She tries to think about something.

Her - Do you love me ?

Him (*shocked*) - Could we do this... progressively.

He thinks about it.

Him - What do we have for dinner, tonight ?

Her - Wednesday, fish.

Him - Fish ? It should be Friday...

Her - Friday is chicken.

Him - A bit fishy, isn't it...?

Silence.

Him - What kind of fish do you want ?

Her - I'll go. I need to get custard, too... What about cod, for a change...?

Him - It's a bit salty, isn't it ?

Her - Not à la Française.

Him - That doesn't involve custard does it ?

Silence.

Him - If ever you cheated on me, would you tell me ?

She looks at him, surprised.

Her - You mean : if you cheated on me, would I want you to tell me or not ?

Him - Also, yes...

Her - Why do you ask ?

Him - Just making conversation... Since we don't have TV anymore.

She thinks about it.

Her - How do you want me to answer this ?

Him - Yes or no !

Her - Do you really think it's that simple ?

Him - No ?

Her - Answering is already accepting the possibility that you could cheat on me.

Him - So ?

Her - It's like if you asked me : if I murdered you, would you prefer me to go surrender to the police right after, or try to escape from justice ?

He doesn't seem to understand.

Her - It supposes that I actually consider the possibility that you could murder me. That is the real question. The rest is irrelevant.

Him - But still, adultery isn't a crime.

Her - It sometimes leads to crime...

He seems a little worried.

Him - If I cheated on you, you could kill me ?

Her - Anyway, if I did, I would most certainly surrender to the police. Justice has always been very lenient towards crimes of passion...

Silence.

Her - So, you actually consider the possibility of cheating on me.

Him - Ninety-five per cent of animals are polygamists. The rest form couples only for as long as it takes to raise their offspring. Proof that fidelity is not a natural thing...

Her - We are not animals. At least, women are not...

Him - There are still five per cent of monogamists among the animals ! It doesn't make humans out of them. Why would fidelity be a criterion of humanity ?

Her - It is the foundation of the family, which is the foundation of society...

Him - So you won't cheat on me solely to remain a good citizen ?

Silence.

Her - Is it that difficult for you to stay faithful to me ?

Him - No... I was just wondering if fidelity had the same meaning for men and women.

Her - So ? Why are men faithful, in your opinion ? When they are, of course...

He thinks about it.

Him - To avoid complications...?

Silence.

Him - Perhaps we should buy another TV.

4 - Quarantine

She is sitting on the couch. He arrives.

Him - It's incredible. I just received another call from a friend of mine inviting me to celebrate his fortieth birthday. Unbelievable, isn't it ?

Her - If you all were twenty at the same time, it is not so strange that twenty years later you could be forty more or less at the same time...

Him - I mean, what's crazy is that I had no news from all this people for years... And all of a sudden, the phone doesn't stop ringing !

Silence.

Her - Are you planning to go ?

Him - It scares me a little. They might have changed, it's been a long time.

Her - Physically, you mean ?

Him - Physically, mentally... I hope they're not too dishevelled.

Her (*simpering*) - What about me ? Are you sure I am not too dishevelled ?

Him - It's different with you, I see you every day, you age little by little. But then, all of a sudden... It'll be like The Return of The Living Dead... It's weird, isn't it, this sudden need to get together when people get close to their fortieth birthday...

Her - It's called a birthday party, isn't it ?

Him - They say that animals move closer to humans when they feel that the end is coming. It must be something like that. A kind of herd instinct. What could I possibly offer him ?

Her - A funeral contract...?

Him - It's expensive, isn't it ?

Her - I'm joking... What about you ?

Him - Yes, sure.

Her - No, I mean : Do you plan to do something about your fortieth anniversary ?

Him - What do you want me to do ? Any idea to preventing it ? Anyway, please, don't organise a surprise party, okay...? If I haven't seen all these people for years, there must be a very good reason.

Silence.

Him - How old are you, exactly ?

She looks at him, shocked, but does not answer.

Her - We should invite the neighbours for dinner one day.

Him - What for ?

Her - For nothing !

Him - They never invited us.

Her - Maybe they didn't dare...

Silence.

Him - Just because we're neighbours, it doesn't mean that we need to be friends...

Her - The only friends we have live three hundred miles from here ! It could be nice to have friends next door...

Him - Well... From a practical point of view... It would cut travelling expenses. And hence reduce

pollution. One could almost say that it is ecological to make friends with one's neighbours.

Silence.

Him - What does he do, exactly ?

Her - I don't know. Every morning, I see him leave home with a briefcase. Who knows where he goes. I'll ask him next time, if you like...

Him - What about her ?

Her - They're very discreet...

Him - Sounds like this dinner will be fun. If we don't want to be intrusive...

Her - You'll can always talk about yourself.

Him - They've got children, haven't they ?

Her - Every day, three of them leave the house to go to school. I suppose they are theirs.

Him - Oh yes... A little, a medium and a big one... (*Worried*) Do we have to invite them too ?

Her - Oh, no ! I'll specify that it's a strictly adult evening. That way there's no ambiguity.

Him - You were speaking about the neighbours in front, right ?

Her - The side neighbours ! The ones in front moved six months ago, after their divorce. Didn't you see the sign "For Sale" ?

Him - No.

Her - And anyway, they didn't have any children.

Him - Really...?

Silence.

Her - It wouldn't be cleaning day, by any chance ?

Him - I'm afraid it is. (*With a sigh*) Housework is the foundation of the couple...

Her - That's probably why a couple is called a household.

Him - And a triangle a "ménage à trois".

She looks at him, surprised.

Him - Ménage means household, in French... When a man lives with two housewives...

Her - Three, in a house, can also be a couple with a child...

Him - Everyone has his own fantasies.

Silence.

Her - So ?

Him – You really think that now is the right time to have a baby ?

Her – It's not a question of money, and you know it... Besides, we're not so poor...

Him – We will be with a bunch of kids...! Look what happens in Africa, with the galloping population growth... I read a book years ago : «Black Africa Had A Bad Start». Well, it hasn't got any better ever since... Today, nobody seriously thinks that Africa is in motion... Apart from the continental drift... The more babies people have, the poorer they are...

Her – Are you sure it is not the other way around ?

Him – Anyway, if poor people don't have any children, the next generation, everybody would be rich... Look at the Chinese. They're not allowed to have more than one baby, and they're already much better off...

Her – Then, let's start with one...

Him - When would we take care of this kid ? We don't even have the time to sweep the floor !

Her - We would hire a cleaner.

Him - But we don't have any room for this child !

Her - You could set up your office in the basement...

Him - That's what I call a bad start... What about you ? Are you planning to stop working ?

Her - We'll hire a nanny.

Him - In addition to the cleaner ? That's no longer a "ménage à trois", it's a small business ! I'm not sure I'm that entrepreneurial...

Silence.

Him - We won't be able to go out in the evening anymore.

Her - We'll hire a baby-sitter.

Him - I never realised just how much of a direct effect population growth has on employment.

Her - And consumerism...

Him - Diapers, baby-food, toys, medical care...

She - New car...

Him – Finally, you're right. This baby will bring an end to the economic crisis...

5 - Definition of love (through what it is not)

Him - How long have we known each other ? Twenty years, at least ? (*Silence*) Why didn't we ever sleep together, by the way ? We get along well, don't we...? We could even have married ! It's weird, I see you a bit like an ex. Though we never went out together... We almost did once, remember ? You forced me to drink. Or perhaps it was the contrary. We ended up at your place, completely drunk. We laughed our heads off all night long, but we forgot to sleep together. Maybe because we get along too well, precisely. It wouldn't be spicy enough. We would get bored, in the end. It's true, we laugh a lot together, but... I can't imagine making love to a girl who is laughing. Well, there are different kinds of laughter. I can make a girl laugh to sleep with her. But sleeping with a girl who makes me laugh...! No, if I slept with you, I would feel like I was sleeping with a buddy. I mean a girl, but... Besides, I don't like blondes. I know, you are not blonde. But you were when I met you... I didn't know that it wasn't your natural colour ! Doesn't hang on much, does it? It is not that I don't like blondes, but... It depends. It must have been the colour. You were too blond for me. Girls who are too blond, I don't know, it puts me off. Physically. I don't know why... It must be something to do with the skin-type. And now it's too late. I will always think of you as a blonde who dyed her hair to become a brunette. Besides you are not really dark-haired... It is not light-brown, either. I don't know how to call it... It's neither blonde nor dark. It's not that I don't think you are sexy, right ? Anyway, all the guys think you are sexy. Usually, it's rather

motivating. But in this case... Really, I can't think exactly why I never felt like sleeping with you... Is that what we call love ? I mean, the «je ne sais quoi» that makes us feel like fucking together, or more if inclined. We figured out what it is, can you believe it ! Through what it is not... Now, why did I marry my wife rather than you or another one ? Well, she liked me. It was easier. If she hadn't liked me right from the beginning, would I have held onto her...? And if I had held onto her, would she have liked it...? We will never know. Mutual love is easier, of course, but it's not so... How can I say...? Conquering without a battle makes the triumph modest. Besides, I wonder what she liked in me ? Have you got any idea... ? I could ask her, of course, but... If she asks me back... Sometimes, there are matters that are best left alone. A bit of mystery in the couple can't hurt. Well, within reason. Once I went out with a girl. After a year or so, she ditched me. I asked her why. She told me that she was bored stiff in bed with me. A whole year ! Isn't that taking discretion a bit too far... Now why did she go out with me for a year ? It didn't even occur to me to ask... There must have been a reason ! Unless she lied. About my sexual performances, I mean... As a form of revenge... I'm not saying that because it hurts my male pride, right ? It just surprised me a little, that's all. It's true, I am a reputedly good lay. What about you ? No, I mean, really, don't you want to tell why you never fancied going out with me ? (*Worried*) You don't have to answer that, hey ?

And meeting again

She arrives, with a big smile on her face.

Her (*pleased*) - Do you recognise me ?

Him (*turning to her, embarrassed*) - No...

Her (*knowingly*) - It was years ago, but still...

Him - Oh, yes, maybe...

Her (*offended*) - Maybe ?

Him - I mean, of course, I remember now... How are things going ?

Her - Not too bad... What are you doing here ?

Him - Well, nothing. What about you ?

Her (*upset*) - Did I change that much ?

Him - Oh, no ! Absolutely. Why ?

Her - You didn't seem to recognise me a while ago.

Him - Sorry, it is just that I didn't expect to see you again, that's all.

Her - Anyway, you didn't change, I can tell you.

Him - Thank you...

Her - So, what's up ?

Him - You know, same old things...

Her - Still very talkative, hey ?

He doesn't know what to say.

Her - Did you come back a long time ago ?

Him - From where...?

Her - Well... From there !

Him - Oh, yes... I mean, not really.

They stupidly smile, embarrassed.

Her (*moved*) - I'm very pleased to see you again.

Him - Me too...

Her (*knowingly*) - I have to go, now. Someone is waiting for me...

She hesitates for a while.

Her - We're not going to shake hands are we ?

Him - Okay...

Taking him by surprise, she French kisses him.

Her (*pathetic*) - We might meet again some other time...

Him (*upset*) - Maybe, yes...

Her - Well... So long Paul !

She lets go of him, with tears in her eyes.

Him - So long.

She leaves, turning around one last time. They wave good-bye from afar. He remains alone.

Him (*taken aback*) - Paul ?

6 - Carpaccio and Bacon

A couple admiring a painting that we can't see, and that is hung on an invisible wall.

Him - Panini, isn't it ?

Her - Let's see.

She gets closer and, leaning forward, reads the name of the painter above the frame.

Her - Not quite, it's... Carpaccio.

Him - Of course...

They admire the painting for a while, and then move on to another one.

Her (*playful*) - Want to give it another try ?

Him - Okay...

He looks the painting carefully.

Him - Picasso...?

She glances at him to make him understand that he is wrong.

Him - Pissaro...?

Her - Pissaro... Picabia !

Him - Oh yes... I always mix them up.

They proceed to the next painting.

Him - Your turn ?

She looks at the painting carefully.

She - Manet...?

He reads the name above the frame.

Him - Monet !

She - Well...! It's about the same, isn't it ?

They go on.

She - Look ! They have got a lot of Bacon too...

He looks at her a little, not sure to understand. Then they go and look at the painting.

Her - It's good, isn't ?

Him - Yes, it's...

Her - It's Bacon.

Him - Yes...

Silence.

Her (*thoughtful*) - Sometimes, I wonder...

Him - What ?

Her - If I didn't know it was Bacon, would I find it so good ?

He looks at her, surprised.

Her - If I didn't know that these paintings are worth millions ! Let's be frank. Imagine that you have never heard of the Mona Lisa. You come across at the flea market. For sale. Three hundred pounds. Can you say for certain that you would hang her up above the fireplace ? This dope with her silly smile ?

He thinks about it.

Him - We do not have a fireplace, anyway...

Her - No, let's be honest, even if we have visited dozens of museums and hundreds of exhibitions, would we really be able to see the difference between a piece of shit and a masterpiece...?

Him - We'll never be able to tell. You don't see anything but masterpieces in museums. It's not fair, by the way. In all museums, they should save a room to expose just really crap stuff. The principal of the placebo test, you see ? Just to check out if the other paintings are really beautiful, or if we find them so just because they told us that they were.

Her - Anyway... Going to museum, it's like going to church, isn't ? One goes there for the atmosphere above all.

Him - Fortunately, you can practice even if you don't believe... The same as for love...

She looks at him, not sure she's understood.

Him - I mean, the same applies to marriage... Look at us... We married in church... However, we don't really believe in God.

Silence.

Her - Do you remember our honeymoon to Paris ? You took me to the Picasso Museum...

Him (*nostalgically*) - Of course, I remember...

Her - We were so excited... It's only half round that we realised that it was the Carnavalet Museum...

Him - Yes... They're both in the same area...

Her (*smiling*) - I did wonder why the preliminaries were taking so long...

Him - The preliminaries...?

Her - I mean, Picasso... His first period...

Him - Oh, yes, of course...

Silence. They start to leave.

Her - Did you heard of that artist who paints under the sea ? (*He is not sure he understands*). He puts on a wet suit, goes into the sea and paints corals.

Him - I must say I never heard of him. Any good ?

Her - Well, pretty good, actually...

7 - Disappearance

A couple, sitting on a couch. They seem to be bored. He starts looking for something.

Him - Do you know where the remote control is ? It seems to have disappeared...

She looks at him, surprised.

Her – But... we don't have a TV anymore !

Him - Oh yes, quite right..

Silence.

Him - What would you do if I disappeared ?

She looks at him, astonished.

Her - Like the remote control, you mean ?

Him - Not like the remote control ! If I disappeared, you see what I mean...

Her - You don't feel well ?

Him - I'm fine, it's just a hypothesis.

Her - Haven't you got a happier one ?

Him - I am older than you. I will probably croak first.

Her - You're hardly three years older...

Him - Women live longer than men, anyway ! Besides, I could have an accident. A heart attack. Cancer.

Her - Me too !

Him - Maybe, but I asked first.

Her - Well I don't know. Do I have some time to think about it ?

Him - Prevention is better than cure...

She looks at him, not sure of understanding.

Him - I mean, it's better to forewarn.

Silence.

Him - Anyway I can tell you, I would rather be cremated.

Her - Why do you tell me that now ?

Him - Well, I won't be able to tell you after, will I ? *(After a while)* It's my nightmare, that is, to be buried alive. Not you ?

Her - It probably doesn't happen very often.

Him - Well, once is enough.

Her - And to be burned alive, doesn't that scare you ?

He looks at her, worried.

Him - I never thought about that... *(After a while)* Do you believe that there is a life after death ?

Her - Is it really something to hope for...?

Him - You wouldn't have to worry about money, you know...

Her *(surprised)* - If there was a life after death, you mean ?

Him - If I were to depart !

Her - Oh, yes... I wasn't worried.

Silence.

Him - I wouldn't be mad at you if you married again, you know.

Her - Thank you.

Him - Well, you wouldn't necessarily have to marry him though..

Her - Him ?

Him - The guy you would get hitched with. You'd better keep your independence.

Her - What independence ?

Him - It's funny, though. I can hardly imagine you with another guy...

Her (*offended*) - Do you think nobody would want to live with me ?

Him - Oh, no. On the contrary. In fact, I think I would be jealous.

Her - When you're dead, you'll be jealous ?

Him - Absolutely...

Her - And what if I were to... depart before you do ?

Him (*fake*) - Well, there you've caught me unprepared. (*After a while*) If I were to get hitched again, would you be mad at me ?

Her - I wouldn't be there to see it.

Him - But you would be jealous...?

She looks at him, suspicious, but does not answer.

Him - Who do you imagine me with ?

Her - Do you want me to introduce you to a girlfriend of mine, just in case ?

Him - For the children, there are godfathers and godmothers... For members of parliament, it's the same. There are substitutes. If one gets sick or dies, you've got a new one at the drop of a hat. It's all organised...

Her - Yes... And for cars, there are a spare wheels... (*Upset*) You are not telling me that you've already found my replacement, are you...?

Him - Well, it's not that easy, you know ? (*After a while*) *Silence.* The good thing about bigamy, is that in case of death, one is only half-widowed.

She looks at him, astonished.

She - Indeed...

8 - The world of sport

She is reading a women magazine. He is bored. After a while, he hesitates, takes out a sports magazine, and starts reading it. She notices it and looks surprised.

Her - You buy sports magazines, now ?

Him - Why wouldn't I ?

Her - Well... And... you're really going to read it ?

Him - I leaf through... To make up my mind...

Her - About what ?

Him - I don't know. A lot of men read this on the tube. I just wondered what was so interesting...

Her - So, did you find out ?

Him - No...

She looks dismayed.

Her - Are you interested in sports ?

Him - Not much...

Her - Then it's not very surprising that you do not find any interest reading sports magazines...

He puts his magazine away.

Him - Well... To be interested in sports is one thing. To feel every morning an irrepressible need to know if Luton beat Bratislava 3 to 1 or if the match ended in a draw is another thing. I don't even know where Bratislava is...

Her - It's the capital of Slovakia, isn't it...

Him - Are you sure ?

Her - Or Slovenia...

Him - Slovenia ? Do you really think they can afford a football team ? It's a very small country...

Her - Well, the Vatican is another one. And they've got a lot of money...

Him - Don't tell me that the Vatican has also got a football team...?

He goes back to his sports magazine.

Her - But why does it matter so much for you, all of a sudden, to understand why men read sports magazines ?

Him - It would seem that I need to be reassured about my manhood...

Her - Well, too bad...

Him - Thank you.

Her - Listen, you can be a man without reading sports magazines.

Him - Really...?

She thinks about it.

Him - I don't know... Do you want me to subscribe you to a car magazine ?

He looks at her, wondering if she is making fun of him. She goes back to her womens' magazine.

Him - What about you ?

Her - Me ?

Him - What interest do you find reading womens' magazines ?

She glares at him.

Her - You read them too...

Him - Well... Only for fun...

Her - I don't read sports magazines... Even for fun...

Him (*disturbed*) - Do you find me effeminate, is that it ?

Her - But, no... All men read their wives' magazines. It's common knowledge. Why do you think there are so many advertisements for cars in womens' magazines ?

Him - Well you don't see many advertisements for washing machines in sports mags.

Her - And yet, football is a very dirty sport... You only have to see the number of football players in the advertisements for washing machines.

She goes back to her magazine. But he still seems preoccupied. She notices.

Her - Is there still something you are worried about ?

Him - No, I was just thinking about the differences between men and women...

Her - So...

Him - Take the clothes, for instance... Pants are no longer a male monopoly, but the skirt is still a woman's privilege.

She looks at him, incredulous.

Him - The same with colours. You women can wear grey or pink as well. We have to stick to grey. Or brown... *(After a while)* You blame us for not liking shopping... But do you realise how depressing a men's shoe store can be ?

She looks worried.

Her - You would like to be able to wear a pink miniskirt with stilettos ?

Him - No ! It's just a simple statement of fact... You have stolen the best of our male attributes, and we did not receive anything in exchange. *(He huffily goes back to his sports magazine)* At least, we still have sports magazines.

9 - Small talk

She is reading. He stares into space. She notices.

Her *(surprised)* - What are you looking at that way ?

Him - TV...

Her - But we don't have one anymore !

Him *(with a sigh)* - I know, but... It's like if my legs had been amputated and I still had pins and needles in my feet...

She stares at him, and then goes back to her book. After a while, she looks at him again.

Her - It's weird, today, I received a call for you on my mobile...

Him - Oh, yes, sorry, I forgot to tell you. I put your phone number on my answering machine at the office, so people I work with can join me during the holidays...

Her - The holidays ? But it's a week from now !

Him - Well... At least, they have it.

Her *(staggered)* - My mobile phone number !? And meanwhile, for a whole week, I'm going to receive calls from "people you work with"...?

Him - I don't know... Tell them to call me back during the holidays...

Her - Don't you think it would have been easier for you to get one ?

Him - Me !? A mobile ! When I'm not at work, I like people to leave me alone. I don't want them to bother me...

Her - So you prefer that they bother me !? I was right in the middle of a disciplinary committee at college, when a guy called me to ask when I - I mean when you - planned to submit your article titled "The wearing of G-string in the workplace is a human right" ? Don't you think it doesn't bother me ?

Him - You don't switch off your mobile during disciplinary committees ?

Her (*ironical*) - Sorry, I forgot... Listen, a mobile is something very personal. You cannot lend it to anybody. Even your husband. I don't know how to explain... It's like a toothbrush...

Him - A toothbrush ? Well... If you want to use my toothbrush during the holidays, no problem...

Her - Well, a computer, then ! Would you let me use your computer if mine was disabled by a virus ?

He does not answer.

Her - And after the holidays ?

He seems not to understand.

Her - I'll still receive calls for you !? It's a good thing you don't have anything to hide...

Him - After the holidays, I'll tell them that I lost this bloody phone. Or even better, that it was stolen from me ! Mobiles are often stolen...

Her - Perfect ! That way, if somebody reaches me anyway, he will call me a thief ! Do I have to remind you that this phone is mine ?!

Him - Well, if you prefer, you can let me have it. And you can buy another one...

Her - Of course ! And then, when the people I know will call me, they'll get in touch with you...

Him - I'll give them your new number, and that's all...

Her - You're right, it's much easier than you simply buying a phone for yourself. (*Suspicious*) Don't tell me you're using mine just to spare you the trouble...?

He does not answer. Silence.

Him - You'll never guess what the butcher called me this morning...

Apparently, she doesn't care.

Him - "Young man"... (*Imitating the butcher*) "And for the young man, what will it be today ?". It's the first time he's called me that...

Her - Well, it's the male equivalent of " And for the young lady, what will it be today".

Him - It's scary, isn't it, that the butcher could see us as "the young man and the young lady" ? It's a good thing that we don't go shopping together. He would be able to call us "the young couple". *(Imitating again the butcher)* "And for the young couple, what will it be today ?". Then, I think I would become a vegetarian on the spot.

Silence.

Him - Anyway, I've always found meat a little disgusting, haven't you ?

Back to her book, she doesn't answer. But he proceeds all the same.

Him - Chicken, at a push... True, it's scary, a butcher's shop, if you think about it. Bleeding flesh spread out everywhere. Entire animal carcasses in the cold room. All those innocent cows locked up in camps in the countryside, surrounded by barbed wire, sometimes even electrified; waiting to be dragged out to the slaughterhouse and be cut up... Poor beasts. At least, they don't know what's going to happen to them. When I see those huge guys, with those kind of white shrouds on their heads, taking the bodies of their victims out of the refrigerator truck, carrying them on their shoulders... Looks like the Ku Klux Klan...

She still does not react. He turns to her.

Him - Did you know that sikhs were strictly vegetarian ?

She finally looks up.

Her - Oh, by the way, no need to go to the department store for a bathroom neon. I dropped in this afternoon. *(After a while)* I came across our neighbour from in front. She was buying a huge suitcase...

He looks at her, seeming not to understand. A mobile rings. She answers.

Her - Yes...?

Her smile vanishes.

She *(with pretend amiability)* - No, this is his secretary speaking, but hold on a second, I'll patch you through right away. Whom do I have to announce ? *(She holds the phone out to him, exasperated)* It's for you. Your buddy Peter...

He takes the phone as if nothing had happened.

Him - Hello !

He seems to be a little embarrassed.

Him - How does this thing work anyway...?

10 - Where do we go when we die ?

They are sitting on a couch.

Him - Did you see the postman, this morning ?

Her - You're expecting something ?

Him - Not really... But I always hope for a miracle when I open the mailbox. To be told I won a competition I didn't go in for. That an old and loaded aunt I didn't even know about died with no heirs. That they awarded me the Nobel Prize in advance for my future work... Every day, opening the mailbox, I am like a child in front of the tree, on Christmas Day.

Her - That's right... Growing up, we don't believe in Santa Claus anymore, but we still believe in the postman. Besides, there are some similarities... They both wear a uniform. They come by with a sack. They drop off packets, and you never get to see them...

Him - Well, the postman, you can see him on Christmas day, precisely, when he comes for his tips... *(With a sigh)* I hate Christmas. Every new year, there are less greeting cards in the mailbox, and more funeral announcements... *(After a while)* But why am I waiting for the postman as if he was the

Messiah...? On the other hand, the Messiah's father might very well have been the postman, right ? Because this story about the Immaculate Conception... Unless you believe in Santa Claus too...

Her - To get letters, you have to write some. Most people just receive answers. If you never send letters, don't be surprised not to get any... I think I never received a letter from you...

Him (*ironical*) - Do you want us to write each other once in a while ?

She looks at him, wondering if he's serious or not.

Him - What could we possibly have to say each other any way...? I would feel like I were writing to myself. Besides, we always write more or less to ourselves, don't we ? There are people you write endless letters to... And when you finally meet them, you realise that you don't have anything to tell them. No, definitely, writing has something to do with onanism...

She treats herself to a drink and lights a cigarette.

Him - You smoke now ?

Her (*surprised*) - Well, yes... I have been smoking for twenty years. Didn't you ever notice ?

Silence.

Him - Did you know that every cigarette reduces your life by ten minutes ? (She does not answer) How many cigarettes a day do you smoke ?

Her (*ironical*) - According to my calculations, I should have died six months ago. Maybe I am...

Silence.

Him - The same with the mobile, right ? Not very healthy. They say that if you use it more than an hour a day, you are sure to get brain cancer. You better not go over your monthly contract... (*After a while*) By the way, you know what your daughter asked me this morning, while I was brushing my teeth ?

Her - No.

Him - Where do we go when we die ?

Her - What did you answer ?

Him - What do you think I answered ?

Her - I don't know.

Him - Right. It's exactly what I answered.

Her - So ?

Him - She told me : But dad, when we die, we go to the cemetery !

Her - And then ?

Him - Then, she went back to eating her corn-flakes. Apparently, she was happy to have taught me something; and a bit surprised that, at my age, I still didn't know what was waiting for me... Incredible, isn't it ?

Her - What ? That she asked you that ?

Him - No, that children are so able to accept simple answers to simple questions. A philosophy teacher would have spoken of metaphysics, immanence, transcendence, the whole damn lot... even God. Children are much more pragmatic. Besides, they are naturally atheist.

Her - They believe in Santa Claus.

Him - Well... Because their parents tell them that he exists, and that he will bring them gifts. Otherwise, they wouldn't have invented him by themselves. If somebody told you that an anonymous benefactor would pay you a bonus at Christmas every year, you wouldn't question his existence. But God never brought us anything for Christmas, and some adults still believe in him... Do you believe ?

Her - In Santa Claus ?

Silence.

Him - What's incredible, too, is that it wouldn't scare her.

Her - What ?

Him - The prospect of being buried ! You and I... we are wetting ourselves... Why not her ? (*After a while*) I'll have to ask her tonight what she means exactly by «when we die, we go to the cemetery »... What do you think she means by that ?

She looks at him, embarrassed.

Her - Well... that.

Him - What... that ?

Her - When we die, we go to the cemetery...

He looks at her, astonished.

Him - Then you believe that too...?

Her - You don't ?

Him - Well, of course... I mean...

He laughs at her.

Him - Wait, don't tell me that it's as simple as that for you too !

Her - In a way... It is.

He looks at her, mocking.

Her - I don't know, a while ago, you thought it marvellous not to worry about anything. To be satisfied with simple answers to simple questions.

Him - Well yes, but... You're not five years old !

Her - Ok, then. Go on. I ask you the question : Where do we go when we die ?

Him (*taken aback*) - Well... It's not as simple as that...

Her - I'm listening...

Him - I don't know, it's... as a fact of matter...

Her - Fact of matter..? You mean as a matter of fact ?

Him - Where do we go when we die...? We go nowhere !

Her - We go to the cemetery !

Him - Well, if you want...

Her - Even if I do not !

Him - But, look... We go to the cemetery, it doesn't mean anything ! One can perfectly well go to the cemetery whilst still alive, have a little walk around, leave the cemetery and go get lunch in a Chinese restaurant. What does that mean, go to the cemetery ? Besides, one can die and not go to the cemetery. When they don't find the body ! You see ? In that case, you can't say : When we die, we go to the cemetery. Can't you see that it is not as simple as you think it is ?

Her - Well... Then if your daughter asks you again, what will you answer ?

Him - I don't know... (*He thinks about it*) I will answer... When we die, we go to the cemetery... usually. If they find the body... When you are alive, you can also go to the cemetery... But when you are dead, it's for ever.

Her (*coughing*) - Yes...

11 - Nightmare

He arrives wearing a blond wig, carrying a football ball, and acting like a child. After a while, she arrives behind him, wearing a man's jacket and a moustache like Hitler or Chaplin.

Her (*loud*) - Guten Tag...

He jumps seeing her.

Him - But... Who are you ?

Her - I am... the baby-sitter.

He looks terrified. She brings out a packet of cigarettes.

Her (*holding out the packet to him*) - Do you smoke ?

He is about to take a cigarette, but prudently renounces.

Him - No, thank you.

Her - Natürlich. It's forbidden... There is an ashtray, but it doesn't mean a thing ! It's only to avoid law-breakers burning the carpet... The same old things. They promulgate laws, but always have an afterthought in case they're not respected... (*She brings out a chewing-gum packet*) Would you like a chewing-gum ?

Him - It gives me wind...

Her - You know why the subway's cicadas are an endangered species ?

Him - There are cicadas, in the subway ?

Her - Or crickets, I don't know. Well it's because they ate cigarette butts. Since they prohibited smoking in the subway, of course, they are starving. Do you realise ? A whole ecosystem has been turned upside down... Well, they could start eating old chewing-gum...

Him - Not long ago, I saw an exhibition about animal life in urban surroundings. It's not very well known, but there is an incredible fauna, in big cities like London. Even wolves. But thousands of them, you know ?

Her - Wolves ?

Him - Of course they only go out by night, in parks...

Her - You mean... foxes ?

Him - Oh, yes, maybe... Anyway, I never saw any of them...

Her - Because most parks close at night...

Sound of a door closed and locked. He looks scared.

Her - The cleaner locked the door... and took the key away.

Him - There are no windows... We won't even be able to call for help...

Her - Don't you have a mobile...?

He goes through all his pockets, and finally smiles with relief while bringing something out of a pocket.

Him - Oh, yes ! (*His smile vanishes while he realises that it is not a mobile*). Gosh, it's the remote control

I was looking for everywhere...

Her - Besides... there is not even a TV in here !

Him - Well... I guess we just have to wait for the postman to set us free tomorrow morning...

Her - Tomorrow, it's Christmas Day.

Him - Oh, yes, that's right, fuck...!

Her - You might be willing to lie down...?

He looks at her, terrified. She brings out a white sheet.

Her - If we are planning to see Christmas together, we better get comfortable... Which side do you prefer ?

Him - I have no preferences...

Her - Then, I will take this one...

She slips under the sheet. He does the same.

Her - Merry Christmas, then !

Him - Well, yes... Merry Christmas...

After a while, he screams and wakes up with a start. She wakes up too. He is no longer wearing his blonde wig, nor she her moustache.

Her - Are you all right, darling ?

Him - Well, yes... I must have had a nightmare. I dreamt it was Christmas Day...

Her (*looking at him, surprised*) - But darling... It is Christmas Day !

12 - Furniture

The stage is totally empty. He is there, standing. She arrives from outside.

Her (*looking around, astonished*) - But... Where is the furniture ?

Him (*proud of himself*) - You will never guess.

She stares at him, waiting for an explanation.

Him - A guy knocked at the door, this morning. An antique dealer...

Her (*worried*) - So ?

Him - At first, of course, I told him that we did not have anything to sell...

Her - And then...?

Him - Then I told myself that it didn't hurt to ask him to value the whole stuff. The estimation was free. You'll never guess how much he offered me for all this shitty things.

Her - How much...?

Him - More than enough to buy others.

Her - Then why did you sell them ?

Him - For a change ! You told me that you wanted to buy another couch.

Her - So...?

Him - You know perfectly well that if we had changed the couch, we would have had to buy another table to match it. Then, we would have to have changed the chairs, and so on...

Her - Well, maybe...

Him - It would have cost a fortune ! And what would have we done with our old furniture ?

She does not answer.

Him - This way, it's much easier.

Her - And... meanwhile ?

Him - Meanwhile what ?

Her - Meanwhile we buy new furniture...

He looks the empty space around him.

Him - As far as I am concerned, I never liked over-furnished rooms.

Her - Well, now, it's not over-furnished at all...

Him - Aren't you happy ?

Her - Not to have furniture anymore...?

Him - But... you told me that you didn't like our old couch !

Her - I never said that I didn't want any furniture at all ! We don't even have a bed anymore !

Him - But I just told you that... I thought you would be happy !

Her (*conciliatory*) - Listen, we will have dinner in a restaurant tonight, then we will spend the night in a hotel, and tomorrow we will go buy furniture. Alright ?

Him - Alright...

Silence.

Him - We still have to choose the style.

Her - Since we have to change, we better go for modern, don't you think ?

Him - Okay... But then, we will have to redo the paintwork...

Her - Don't you think you're a bit too perfectionist ?

Him - Modern furniture with this dirty paintwork ? It will clash...

Her (*ironical*) - We'd better move, hadn't we ?

Him - Do you think so ? (*After a while*) At least, that way, it would be done very quickly... We turn the water and the electricity off before we go out, and we wouldn't even have to come back.

She suddenly worries about something.

Her - Did you think about emptying the drawers ?

Him - Of course.

Her - What about your wedding ring ?

Him - My wedding ring...?

Her - The one you were keeping in the bedside table drawer !

Him - Oh, shit...

She does not add anything, but she looks staggered. So does he.

Him - It has been there for so long. I didn't even think...

Silence.

Her - Have you got this antique dealer's address ?

Him - No... He gave me cash, put the whole stuff in his truck, and left. *(After a while, unconvinced)* If he finds it, he will probably give us a call...

Her *(bitter)* - Yes... And if he doesn't, you'll always be able to change your wife... You'll just have to choose a more modern one, to match the new paintwork and the new furniture.

Him - I'm really sorry...

Her - Why didn't you ever wear the wedding ring anyway ?

Him - I did ! Before we got married... Remember ? I bought our rings in a bazaar in Yemen; to make them think we were married. Otherwise, they didn't want to rent us a hotel room.

Her - Well, now that you sold our furniture, including our bed, we won't have any other choice but to find a hotel tonight...

Him - Don't worry. We live in a civilised country. They won't ask for our marriage certificate...

Her - And after the wedding ? Why did you leave your ring in the drawer ?

Him - Well... I was afraid of losing it.

Silence.

Him - Are you angry...?

She does not answer.

Him - Come on, let's go !

Her - Where ?

Him - To the hotel ! It will be like another honeymoon ! No more rings, no more furniture, no home anymore... We'll start all over again !

Her - I still have my ring...

Him - You better take it off.

Her - Why ?

Him - You look married, I don't. In the hotel, they will think we have an illegitimate relationship...

Her - So you're giving me the choice between celibacy and adultery, are you ?

They leave.

Her - You have got a strange idea of marriage.

Emergency exit

Light on a couple, about to leave. He puts on his coat. She takes out a cigarette.

Her (*enthusiastic*) - So...?

Him (*categorical*) - Crap.

Her (*shocked*) - Crap ?

Him - Load of crap.

Her - You didn't understand anything, then ?

Him - There was something to understand ?

Her - Oh, yes, of course...

Him (*looking at her*) - Of course what ?

Her - You get your revenge...

Him - What revenge...?

Her – This time I liked it, then you don't... That's really mean, don't you think ?

Him - Wait, I didn't like it, that's all ! I'm not going to tell you that I liked it just to please you !

Her - You didn't say that you didn't like it, you said that it was crap. It's not exactly the same !

Him - Well, I don't really see the difference...

Her - It was crap, I liked it, so I am crap.

Him - You said it...

Her - I didn't say it, Plato did.

Him - Plato says that you're crap ?

Her - It's called a syllogism. All women are mortal, I am a woman, so I am mortal.

Him - If Plato says so, then... As far as I am concerned, I just said that I found this thing dead boring.
(After a while) Besides, I'm not even sure that your syllogism stands up.

Her - That's right, go on...

Him - But... what did you like ?

Her - Everything !

Him - That's rather vague, isn't it ?

Her - What did you not like ?

Him - Well, I'd rather not get into details. You'll get upset again...

Her - Me, upset ? Wait, I don't care you didn't like ! I liked it, that's all. I feel sorry for you if you were bored...

Silence.

Him - We're not going to argue about that, are we ?

Her - Sometimes, I wonder what we're doing together...

He takes her gently by the shoulder.

Him - Come on...

Her - Next time, I hope we will both like it...

Him - Or at least that we will agree...

She looks at him.

Him - We might both get bored.

Her - Well yes... It's a minimalist idea of harmony...

They leave. Dark.